

FEB 12 1993

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Communiqué

Alliance Quebec makes the case for leaving francization norms as they are

MONTREAL February 11 --- Alliance Quebec President Robert Keaton presented facts and figures to demonstrate why there should be no change in the requirements for francization of businesses in Quebec.

"To do so could cause all Quebecers more economic hardship," Mr. Keaton stated, "especially for the English-speaking community of Quebec."

At a news conference today, the third the Alliance has held on language issues recently, Mr. Keaton listed a series of statistics compiled by the Quebec government which show that French is currently dominant in the workplace.

"According to the figures from the *Conseil de la langue française*, no less than 91% of private sector employees in Quebec now spend the majority of their time working in French.

"On the island of Montreal, 84% work mostly in French although 71% of Montrealers use French at home. And off island, where most small and medium-sized business is located, 97% of people work mostly in French."

The Minister Responsible for the Charter of the French language, Claude Ryan, has asked the *Conseil de la langue française* to consider lowering the threshold for francization, forcing businesses with fewer than 50 employees to obtain a francization certificate.

"That takes us into the realm of small business," Mr. Keaton noted. "And small business is a very important part of Quebec's economic fabric. They employ one third of all working Quebecers. And 59% of their workforce is under 35 years of age. Small business alone brings in 14% of all the profits recorded in Quebec."

There are more startling facts:

- From 1978 to 1988, as provincial legislation on francization was being applied to larger businesses in Quebec, small businesses created a net total of almost half a million new jobs in Quebec;
- In the same ten year period more than 100 000 jobs were lost in large companies who had 500 or more employees in Quebec;

"Clearly, small businesses make a crucial contribution to our economy" Mr. Keaton concluded. "It's clear too that small businesses in Quebec have no money to waste."

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Mr. Keaton added that the small business sector is an important environment for jobs for the members of the English-speaking community.

"It's one sector where people have been able to continue to work without perfect French skills. The prospect of introducing francization programs into small businesses in Quebec will certainly not increase the prospects of young English-speaking Quebecers entering the job market."

In a study released last fall, the Task Force on Job Opportunities for English-speaking Youth in Quebec reported that 62% of English-speaking youth in high schools in Quebec felt that they would probably be leaving Quebec within five years.

"These individuals are a tremendous resource for Quebec," Mr. Keaton stated. "Their prospects and their potential in Quebec must be considered in planning the future of this province. Francization of small businesses does not increase the prospects of these young people in any way."

"We at Alliance' Quebec feel it is important that we consider the economic issues and the reality of the extent of French usage in the economic environment of small business in Quebec today."